BOB STONE

RECEIVED
MAY 13 1993
FCC MAIL ROOM

93-48 /

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Kids are exposed to too much violence on TV - Juvenile crime in California is soaring - and TV exposes kids to guns and how casually and easily they're used -

Lower the boom on producers of crime shows -

Thank you

Robert H. Stone

BOB STONE

No. of Copies rec'd 0
List A B C D E

93-48 / 5-10-93

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

RECEIVED

We do hope, you will make a difference for the better, for the million of American children (and adults)!

Sincerely,

Dr. & Mrs. John G. Papastavridis

Dr. & Mrs. John G. Papastavridis
457 Burlington Rd., N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30307

HOW TO INFLUENCE TV FOR KIDS

Concerned about what's on television for kids? How many hours of educational and informational programming — and what kinds of shows — should stations broadcast? You can send your ideas to the Federal Communications Commission, which is trying to answer those questions as it considers tougher rules for children's television.

The FCC will accept contributions until June 7.

Write to: Children's TV MM Docket No. 93-48, Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, Room 222, 1919 M. St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554.

In addition to writing, experts on children and television suggest several ways that parents can try to counter the negative effects on children of watching television:

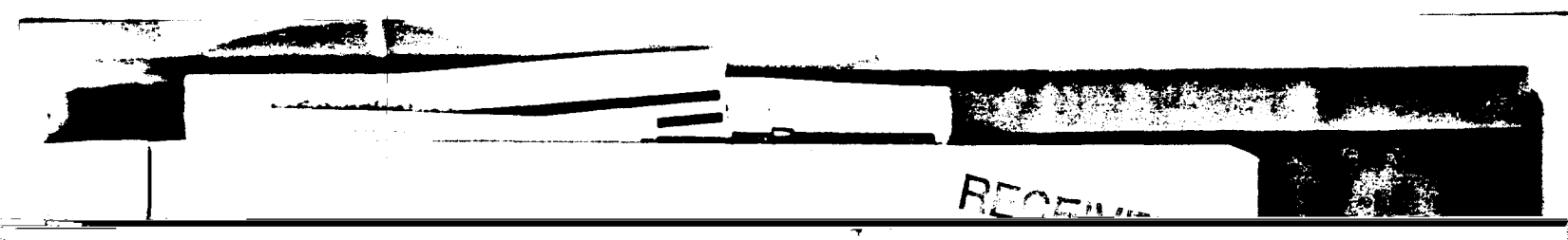
► Help your child make a time chart of daily activities: homework, play, TV watching, etc. Talk about what to eliminate and put in its place.

► Explain to your child how violence on television is "faked" using stunt men, camera angles and other video techniques.

► Don't use television as a reward or punishment.

► Explain to the child the values your family holds about sex, drugs, alcohol and the treatment of women and the less-fortunate.

TV shapes politics in Eastern Europe, Russia. A1



The Sierra Club, founded in 1892 by John Muir, has devoted itself to the study and protection of the earth's scenic and ecological resources—mountains, wetlands, woodlands, wild shores and rivers, deserts and plains. The publishing program of the Sierra Club offers books to the public as a nonprofit educational service in the hope that they may enlarge the public's understanding of the Club's basic concerns. The point of view expressed in each book, however, does not necessarily represent that of the Club. The Sierra Club has some sixty chapters coast to coast, in Canada, Hawaii, and Alaska. For information about how you may participate in its programs to preserve wilderness and the quality of life, please address inquiries to
Sierra Club, 730 Polk Street, San Francisco, CA 94109.

Sierra Club Books paperback edition: 1992

The author gratefully acknowledges permission to reprint portions of the following copyrighted materials:
From *A Basic Call to Consciousness: The Hau De No Sau Address to the Western World,* published by Akwesasne Notes, reprinted by permission of Akwesasne Notes; from *Now That the Buffalo's Gone* by Alvin Josephy, Jr., copyright © 1982 by Alvin Josephy, Jr., reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.; from William N. Fenton, ed., *Parker on the Iroquois* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1984), excerpts from pp. 12, 32, 38, 39, 41, 55. By permission of the publisher; from *Stone Age Economics* by Marshall Sahlins, published by Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago. Reprinted by permission of Marshall Sahlins; excerpts from *Village Journey* by Thomas R. Berger. Copyright © 1985 by Inuit Circumpolar Conference. Reprinted by permission of Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc.; from *Mind Children* by Hans Moravec. Reprinted by permission of the publisher, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, copyright © 1988 by Hans Moravec.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Mander, Jerry.
In the absence of the sacred : the failure of technology and the survival of the Indian Nations / by Jerry Mander.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-87156-509-9
1. Indians—Social conditions. 2. Indians—Land tenure. 3. Indians—Civil rights. 4. Technology—Social aspects. 5. Technology—Moral and ethical aspects. I. Title.
E98.S67M36 1991
970.004'97—dc20 91-13869
CIP

Jacket design by Paul Bacon
Book design by Seventeenth Street Studios
Composition by Wilsted & Taylor
Production by Amy Evans
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper containing a minimum of 50% recovered waste paper, of which at least 10% is post-consumer waste.
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To

5
TELEVISION (1): AUDIOVISUAL TRAINING FOR THE MODERN WORLD

PEOPLE WHO HAVE read *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* will recognize much of the information in this chapter. I am restating certain points in the present context because of the critical role television plays in the larger technological web.

For most human beings in the Western world, watching television has become the principal means of interaction with the new world now under construction, as well as a primary activity of everyday life. At the same time, the institutions at the fulcrum of the process use television to train human beings in what to think, what to feel, and how to be in the modern world.

In the chapter that follows this one, which deals with satellite television, we examine additional impacts of television in the less-developed countries, where it serves as an instrument of cultural cloning.

LIVING INSIDE MEDIA

Let's start with some 1990 statistics. They are of such monumental importance, and yet are so infrequently discussed, that I try to include them whenever I write about television.

- According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, 99.5 percent of the homes in the United States that have electricity have television sets. Elec-

tronically speaking, we are all wired together as a single entity. An electronic signal sent from a single source can now reach nearly every person in the country—250 million people across 3 million square miles—at exactly the same time. When such figures first appeared in the sixties, Marshall McLuhan hailed them as a portent of a new "global village," but he missed an important political point. The autocratic potential—the power of the one speaking into the brains of the many—is unprecedented. Its consequences are only discussed adequately in science fiction, by such people as Orwell and Huxley. The consequences are also keenly appreciated by those institutions large enough to attempt to control the medium: corporations, government, religion.

- According to the A. C. Nielsen Company, 95 percent of the U.S. population watches some TV every day. No day goes by without a "hit" of television, which indicates the level of engagement, or addiction, that people feel for the medium.
- Nielsen reports that the average American home has a television on for

FREEDOM OF SPEECH FOR THE WEALTHY

We think of television as a democratic medium, since we all get to watch it in our homes. But if it is "democratic" on the receiving end, it is surely not that on the sending end.

According to *Advertising Age*, about 75 percent of commercial network television time is paid for by the 100 largest corporations in the country. Many people do not react to this statistic as being important. But consider that there are presently 450,000 corporations in the United States, and some 250 million people, representing extremely diverse viewpoints about lifestyle, politics, and personal and national priorities. Only 100 corporations get to decide what will appear on television and what will not. These corporations do not overtly announce their refusal to finance programs that contain views disconsonant with their own; their control is far more subtle. It works in the minds of television producers who, when thinking about what programs to produce, have to mitigate their desires by their need to sell the programs to corporate backers. An effective censorship results.

While a small number of corporations pay for 75 percent of commercial broadcast time, and thereby dominate that medium, they now also pay for more than 50 percent of public television. During the Reagan years, federal support for noncommercial television was virtually eliminated, leaving a void that public television filled by appealing to corporations. As corporate influence has grown in public TV, so has the quality and length of the corporate commercial tags before and after the shows they sponsor. Whereas public television once featured such messages as "This program has been brought to you through a grant by Exxon," now we see the Exxon logo, followed by an added advertising phrase or two and an audio slogan.

The reason why only the largest corporations in the world dominate the broadcast signals is obvious: They are the only ones who can afford it. According to the present structure of network TV, a half-minute of prime time sells for about $200,000 to $300,000; during events such as the Super Bowl, the price is more like $700,000. Very few medium-sized corporations or businesses, and even fewer individuals, could pay $200,000 for a single message broadcast to the world.

If you and your friends decided that you had a very important statement to make about an issue—let's say the cutting down of old-growth redwoods in the Pacific Northwest—and if you were very fortunate (and rich), perhaps you could manage to raise sufficient money to actually place your message on the airwaves—*once*. Meanwhile, the multinational corporation doing the logging could buy the spot that appears before yours,

and the one immediately after, and then three more later in the evening, and then five more tomorrow and the next day and the day after, and so on throughout the month. Some corporations have advertising budgets ranging from 100 million to over one billion dollars per year. Television is effectively a "private medium," for their use only.

That television is a private system in the hands of the largest corporations is difficult for most Americans to grasp. This is because we believe that freedom of speech is an inalienable right that we all enjoy equally. Nothing could be further from the truth. As A. J. Liebling said, "Freedom of the press is available only to those who own one." Similarly, freedom of speech is more available to some than to others, namely, to the people who can purchase it on national television. This leads to certain kinds of information dominating the airwaves.

The 100 largest corporations manufacture drugs, chemicals, cosmetics, packaged-processed foods, cars, and oil, and are involved in other extractive industries. But whether you are viewing a commercial for aspirin, cars, or cosmetics, the message is exactly the same. *All* advertising is saying this: Whether you buy this commodity or that one, satisfaction in life comes from commodities.

So we have the most pervasive and powerful communications medium in history, and it is totally financed by people with identical views of how life should be lived. They express this view unabashedly. Which brings us to the most shocking statistic: *The average American who watches five hours of television per day sees approximately 21,000 commercials per year.* That's

• • •

Even in the absence of chemical evidence of addiction, the amount of time people spend daily in front of their TV, and the way lives are scheduled around it, ought to be sufficient, *de facto* proof of TV's hypnotic and addictive abilities. In fact, when I interviewed people for *Four Arguments,* interviewees consistently used terms such as "hypnotic," "mesmerizing," or "addictive" to describe their experiences of television viewing. And many used the term "zombie" to describe how their kids looked while watching television.

Eventually, I sought scientific evidence about the validity of these anecdotal descriptions, and found some researchers ready to validate such characterizations.

For example, scientists who study brain-wave activity found that the longer one watches television, the more likely the brain will slip into "alpha" level: a slow, steady brain-wave pattern in which the mind is in its most receptive mode. It is a noncognitive mode; i.e., information can be placed into the mind *directly*, without viewer participation. When watching television, people are receiving images into their brains without thinking about them. Australian National University researchers call this a kind of "sleep-teaching." So if you look at your child in front of the TV and think of him or her as "zonked," that is apparently an apt description.

There are many reasons why the brain slips into this passive-receptive alpha condition. One reason is the lack of eye movement when watching TV, because of the small size of the screen. Sitting at a normal distance, the eye can gather most of the image without scanning the screen for it. The image comes in whole. This lack of *seeking* images disrupts the normal association between eye movement and thought stimulation, which is a genetically provided safety valve for human beings. Before modern times, any unusual event in the environment would attract instant attention; all the senses would immediately turn to it, including the vision sense and its "feeler," the eyes. But when an image doesn't have to be sought, an important form of mental stimulation is absent.

A second factor causing the brain to slip into alpha-wave activity is that, with the eyes not moving and the screen flickering on and off sixty times per second, an effective hypnosis is induced, at least in the view of psychologists who use hypnotism. Looking at the flickering light of a TV screen is akin to staring at the hypnotist's candle.

I think the third factor is the most important. The information on the TV screen—the images—come at their own speed, outside of the viewer's

control; an image *stream*. One doesn't "pull out" and contemplate TV images, as if they were still photographs or images described in a written passage. If you attempted to do that you would fall behind the image stream. So there are two choices: surrender to the images, or withdraw from the experience. But if you are going to watch television (or film) at all, you *must* allow the images to enter you at their own speed. So, the nature of the experience makes you passive to its process, in body and mind. (More complete discussions of this process can be found in *The Plug-In Drug* by Marie Winn, and Australian National University's *Choice of Futures* by Fred and Merrylyn Emery, as well as in *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television.*)

Does this problem also exist with other media? Not to the same degree. Take film, for example. The nature of the film-going experience is that one usually goes with a friend. That, in itself, stimulates the mind. And since film is shown in a public place, with other people present, there are many more stimuli and feelings accompanying the experience; a mood envelops the room.

Also, film imagery is much more refined and detailed than television imagery. The TV image, composed of tiny dots, is very coarse compared with film. A lot is lost in the television picture. Film, on the other hand, can bring out great background detail, much better images of nature, much greater subtlety. The richer the detail of the image, the more involving it is to the viewer. (This comparative advantage for film imagery over TV will only be partially mitigated when "high-definition TV" is introduced in a few years.)

Films are almost always shown on a much larger screen than are television programs, thus requiring considerably more eye movement. And when the film is over, the theater lights come up, people react, and finally rise to leave. They don't just sit there as the next stream of imagery invades them. The act of leaving, and then perhaps going to a café and talking it over, combined with the other elements of film-going, serve to bring the images up from the lower right brain (where images would otherwise reside, like dreams) into greater consciousness. The images come out of the unconscious, unusable realms into the conscious, where they can be examined to some extent.

Radio is a medium that does not impose images at all; in fact, radio stimulates the imagination in much the way books do. A situation is described and the listener actively visualizes. This very act suppresses alpha. When watching television, on the other hand, one's own image-making goes into dormancy.

Print media are by far the most engaging and participatory of any media. Since there is no inherent time limitation with books and newspapers, they can offer much more complex detail and background than any so-called visual medium. If I should now ask you to imagine a lush green field with a trickling stream, billowy clouds above, two great white dogs lying in the grass, lovers on a nearby hillside . . . you can certainly imagine that scene in great detail and color. You created these pictures in your own mind; they do not necessarily match the image I have in my mind of the same scene. If a similar image were shown on television, it would be flatter than the one you created. Meanwhile you would not be engaged in your

ACCELERAT

In their famous s
lian National Unive
in Australia, there
among children. I f
of hyperactive child
they seem to calm
results.

Here's how it wo

ACCELERATION OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

In their famous study of the effects of television, researchers at Australian National University predicted that as television became more popular in Australia, there would be a corresponding increase in hyperactivity among children. I found this prediction alarming because many parents of hyperactive children place their kids in front of the television set, where they seem to calm down. Apparently, the opposite effect is what finally results.

Here's how it works: While sitting quietly in front of the TV, the child sees people punching each other on the screen. There is the impulse to react—the fight-or-flight instinct is activated—but since it would be absurd to react to a television fight, the child suppresses the emotion. As the fighting continues, so does the cycle of impulse and suppression. Throughout the television-viewing experience, the child is drawn back and forth on this see-saw of action and suppression, all the while appearing zapped and inactive. When the set goes off, this stored-up energy bursts forth in the disorganized, frantic behavior that we associate with hyperactivity. Often, the only calming act is to again put the set on, which starts the cycle anew. But there are also more subtle ways that television speeds humans up.

• • •

I am a member of the pre-television generation. Until I was in my late teens, there wasn't any television. So as a child my after-school activities were different from those of the average child today.

I can recall how it felt coming home from school every day. First, I would look in the refrigerator to see if my mother had left me any snacks. I would quickly take care of those. Then, I might play with the dog. I would go up to my room. I would lie on the living room floor. I would become bored. Nothing to do.

Slowly I would slip into a state that I have lately begun to call "downtime" (not in the computer sense)—a kind of deadly boredom. A bottom of feeling, as it were. It was connected with a gnawing anxiety in the stomach. It was so unpleasant that I would eventually decide to *do something*. I would call a friend. I would go outdoors. I would play ball. I would read.

I think that the downtime I am describing was the norm for kids during the 1940s, when life was slower than it is today. Looking back, I view that time of nothingness as serving an important creative function. Out of this nothing-to-do condition some activity would eventually emerge. You got to the bottom of your feelings, you let things slide to their lowest state, and

then you took charge. You experienced yourself in movement, with ideas. Taking all young people in the country as a group, this downtime could be considered a national genetic pool of creativity.

Today, however, after teenagers come home and begin to slip into downtime with its accompanying unpleasant feeling, they reach for the television knob. This stops the slide. Used this way, television is a mood-

then suddenly at hands, then suddenly you are outdoors. Long periods of historical time are jammed together. You move from landscape, to sky, to humans in rapid succession. Young people are running toward you—*Cut.* Now they are on a beach—*Cut.* Now you are watching beer poured into a glass—*Cut.* Now music is playing—*Cut.* An announcer speaks from somewhere. Now you are in Europe. Now in Asia. There is a war, there is a commercial . . . All of this is jammed together in a steady stream of imagery, fracturing your attention while condensing time and mixing categories of reality, nonreality, and semireality.

These image fluctuations and technical changes, as well as hundreds of other kinds not mentioned, are what I have called technical events in television imagery. These alterations of the image could not happen in ordinary life; they are *technical* alterations only possible within moving-image media: films, video, or television.

If you actually counted these technical events as I suggested above, you would find that during commercials—especially during prime time—the image changes at an average of ten to fifteen times per thirty-second commercial. During a regular program on a commercial channel, camera movements or technical events occur about seven to ten times per minute. On public television programs, there are probably three to four camera movements or technical events per minute. (There are fewer on public television than commercial television simply because commercial television can afford more cameras, more edits, and more technology. Similarly, advertisers can spend more than any television program can afford. This is one reason why people pay attention to advertising despite the lack of real content. It is visually more engaging. When people say that "advertising is the most interesting thing on television" they are not aware they are speaking about the *technology* of advertising.)

This hyperactivated imagery continues for as long as a viewer is watching the screen. For heavy viewers of television it means five or six (or more) hours living within a perceptual universe that is constantly fractured, and in which time and events are both condensed and accelerated.

Finally, the set goes off. The viewers are back in their rooms. Nothing is moving. The room does not rise up or whirl around. People do not suddenly flash on and off in front of them. It doesn't become tomorrow or yesterday in a flash. Actually, nothing at all is happening. There is simply the same room as before: walls, windows, furniture. Ordinary life and ordinary feelings and thoughts. Very slow, by comparison. Too slow. Anxiety sets in.

Having lived in the amazingly rapid world of television imagery, ordinary life is dull by comparison, and far too slow. But consider how it

affects one's ability to be in nature. The natural world is *really* slow. Save for the waving of trees in the wind, or the occasional animal movement, things barely happen at all. To experience nature, to feel its subtleties, requires human perceptual ability that is capable of slowness. It requires that human beings approach the experience with patience and calm. Life in the modern world does not encourage that; it encourages the opposite. Cars, planes, video games, faxes, Walkmans, television, computers, working and traveling on schedules dictated by assembly lines and offices—we in the Western world have attuned ourselves to rhythms that are outside of nature. We are trained to seek satisfaction in the packaging that technology provides. Big "hits." We live in a world of constant catharsis, constant change, constant unrest. While out in the *real* world, in nature, we become anxious and uncomfortable. We desire to get back indoors, to get that TV set back on, to get "up to speed."

For children, this change is very serious, and has been well noted by

THE POLITICS OF CONFUSED REALITY

When people spend the greatest part of their lives relating to television imagery, then television imagery becomes the greatest part of people's lives. It begins to seem like life itself. Television images define the terms of people's understanding, the boundaries of human awareness. Without an offsetting system of imagery in people's lives, television images take on a quality of reality that they do not deserve.

The political consequences of such a situation, where a population becomes isolated within an artificial information environment, has been a favorite subject of many science-fiction writers over the years.

George Orwell's *1984* describes an information environment so monolithic and aggressive that it became the total source and absolute limit of human knowledge. Every room had a two-way "telescreen" that could not be turned off; its nonstop programming consisted of official music, economic data, and constant reports of military victories.

In *1984*, television became the instrument of daily training sessions for human emotions via constant juxtapositions of the images of Good vs. Evil: the benevolent, beloved Big Brother versus the hated, loathsome enemy, Goldstein. "Two Minutes Hate" periods would be regularly scheduled each day; the "disgusting" image of Goldstein on the TV screen, amid streams of official invective, caused the entire populace to join frenzied mass rages, "a hideous ecstacy of fear and vindictiveness."

Print media—books, documents, diaries—were virtually eliminated. Without such written records, the past became a manufactured creation of the present. Anything that differed from the telescreen version of reality existed solely in the memories of a few individuals, who would eventually be found out. Earlier languages were destroyed, and it was forbidden to visit the wilderness, which was itself the past.

The effect of the total control of imagery was to unify mass consciousness within a single-media version of reality. With all information coming disembodied via the telescreen, and with the whole population receiving this monolithic information at the same time, and with no verifiable points of comparison, how was one to know what was true and real and what was not? Did Goldstein even exist? Did Big Brother? How could anyone know? Reality was up for grabs. Resistance to information was pointless. All minds merged with the official imagery. Eventually, people accepted even utterly contradictory "doublethink" statements: "WAR IS PEACE," "HATE IS LOVE," "IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH."

Obviously, there are big differences between the scenario depicted in *1984* and present-day America, but as television-viewing statistics indi-

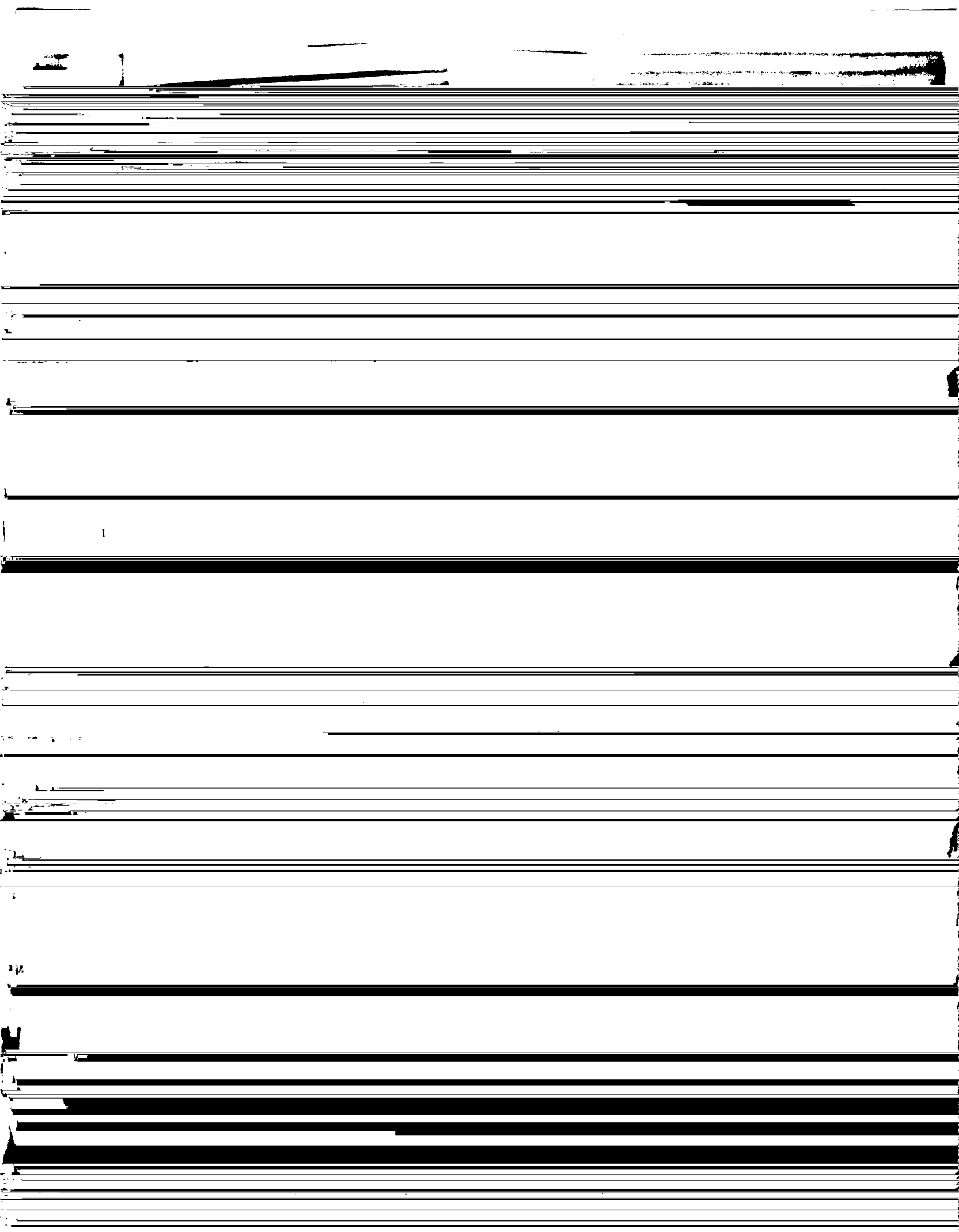
cate, the differences may be less significant than the similarities. Television has become the primary world we relate to. Like Orwell's nonstop broadcasts, TV enters and occupies our minds and causes similar results, as we will discuss.

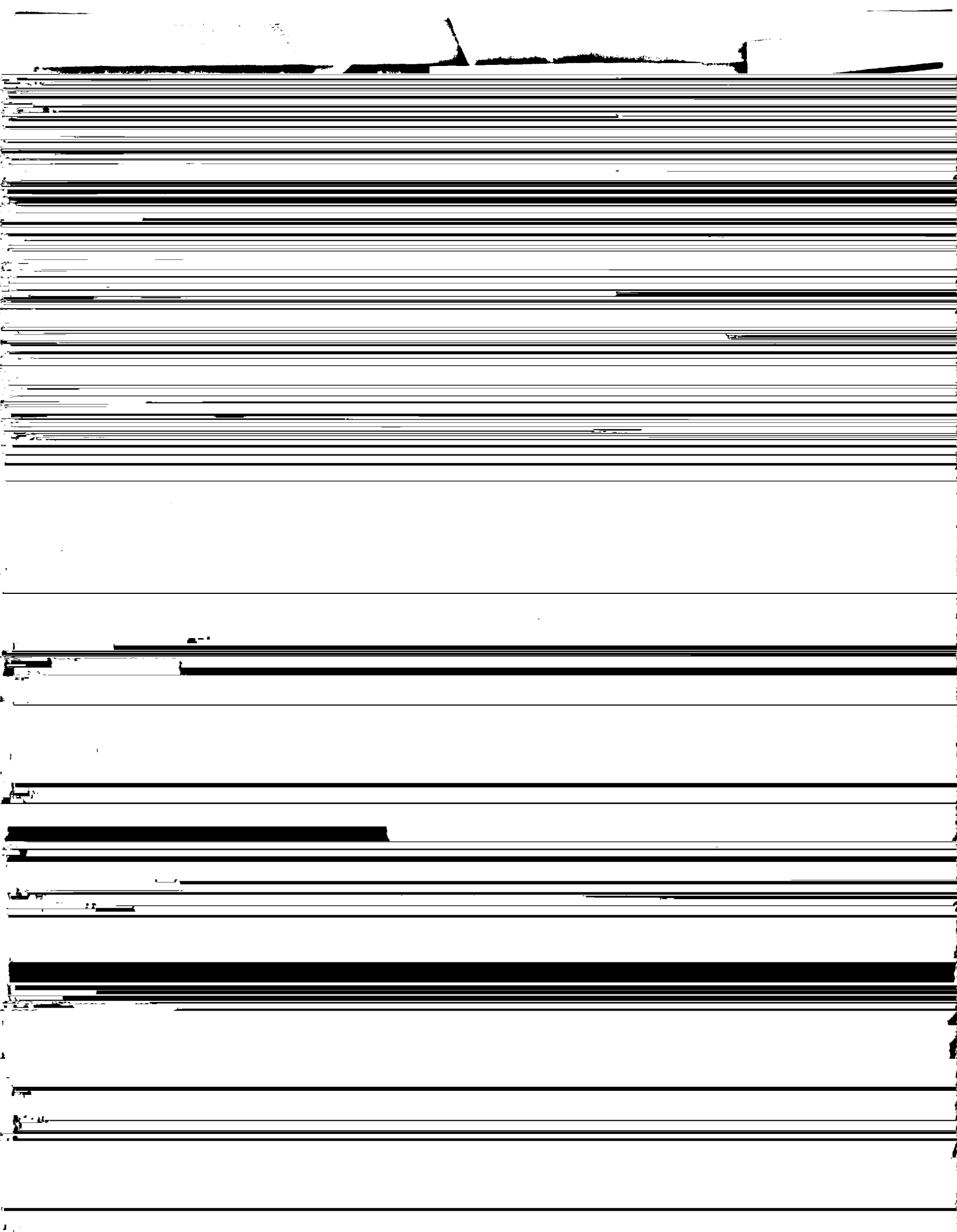
In his science-fiction book *Fahrenheit 451,* Ray Bradbury tells of a society in which human relationships are less important than the relationships people have with characters in television shows. Every home has a wall-sized television screen. And the characters on the screen are programmed to address the viewers personally. The TV characters, therefore, become the primary characters in people's lives.

You have only to listen to conversations these days—on buses, in restaurants, or even at the office—to observe that many people discuss the characters in sitcoms and soaps as if they were neighbors or friends. People in our society often follow the lives of TV people with greater care and interest than they follow the lives of their own family members. For many people—especially heavy television viewers—life and television have already merged.

There are bizarre consequences to this. Years ago, 250,000 people wrote to Marcus Welby, M.D., asking for medical advice. Performers in soaps have often been assaulted and verbally abused by people on the street for their characters' behavior. Many researchers—most notably, Gerbner and Gross of the University of Pennsylvania—have established that Americans tend to take even fictional TV shows as true and believable. Recently, people such as Nancy Reagan, Henry Kissinger, and Michael Jordan have made guest appearances on sitcoms. Does this make the other characters, or the show itself, more real? Or does it make Kissinger less real? Fiction and reality have lost their boundaries.

People who immerse themselves in the surrogate reality of television life deal on a daily basis with a reality totally unlike any that has preceded it. For example, when watching television news, you are presumably taking in actual world events, happening before *you* as they happen in real-time. But actually, most of what you see happened earlier; you are viewing edited tapes of these events. Sometimes the events being described are not presented as images, but are verbal descriptions by the announcer. Then the news is interrupted by a commercial. The commercial is not happening in the same place as the event that just preceded it, nor is the announcer in that place. Yet they are all somehow within this image stream. Soon after this, you may be watching a fictional dramatic program, which uses real people performing scripted events, in an accelerated time frame, also interrupted by commercials that may feature well-known stars relating to unreal situations in a realistic manner. Then you watch a docudrama,





assertion, the heavy use of symbolic content, and the appeal to formulaic values, deeply imbedded in Americans by previous decades of television and film: Good vs. Evil, America vs. The Enemy, Revere the Flag. (Reagan's protégé, George Bush, also learned these lessons; he was elected in 1988 because of his embrace of TV symbolism—the flag, the pledge of allegiance, black rapists—mixed with spots about Dukakis and pollution, which turned out to be lies.)

Reagan's most remarkable achievement was to incorporate in his own persona an amazing set of archetypes from the popular movies of the 1940s and 1950s. In the *real* role of president, Ronald Reagan re-created a set of images that had been reinforced by standard story lines since World War II; he was making real what was previously just imagery held in the minds of the population.

Ronald Reagan became the World War II hero, standing tall. He became the admiral on the bridge of the ship, taking on the hated Nazis and Japanese, though it became the Commies and the Iranians. He was the western hero, slow to anger, but push him too far and he became fierce in his response. He was not Rambo, a contemporary unfeeling slaughterer. He had morals. He was John Wayne. He was Gary Cooper in *High Noon*.

Reagan was also the family man of the 1950s: affable, homey, a little bit sexy, and in love with his adoring wife. He was kindly and grandfatherly, with a few personality quirks. He didn't remember things so good. He pronounced some of them fancy French names wrong. He meant Camus, but he said "Kaymus." But his fallabilities made us love him more; they gave him an unthreatening, comedic aspect, sort of like Jimmy Stewart.

Yet he was also the authoritative spokesperson—the same one he used to be for General Electric. He believed in the technological dream and was willing to sell it hard. He believed in the American vision of the good life. He knew technology could achieve anything. He loved the challenge of the future. "Progress is our most important product."

All of these characteristics were stereotypes from popular movies of the forties and fifties, and they remained in the minds of the millions of people who saw them. They conjured memories of a simpler time, when solutions were clear, when America was on top, and heroes and ordinary people could change things.

Ronald Reagan could reach into those memories of a generation, and incorporate them into himself. He appealed to the collective media unconscious to produce an almost alchemical result, making real what was previously fiction.

Reagan also grasped the antihistorical nature of TV reality, its *nowness*. He was very aggressive in his attempts to create historical truth. He under-

stood that when a population is confined to a single information source, especially one that speaks imagery directly into the brain, that source has unprecedented power as a tool to control human minds. As in *1984*, real and unreal, truth and fiction, become equally arbitrary, for there is no way to clarify or check what TV asserts. And so Reagan could call his invasion of Grenada a "rescue" of students who were never in danger. He could assert that the Soviets knew that Korean Air flight 007 was a passenger plane before they shot it down, though subsequent stories suggested that Reagan *knew* that the Soviets did *not* know. (The initial image stuck, and the event is still understood in those terms today.) By asserting that Libya was behind the Berlin disco bombing, Reagan made *that* true for millions of Americans, and we supported his bloody retaliation, though later evidence showed that Syria had most likely created that event.

Ronald Reagan called MX missiles "peacekeepers." He said that lowering taxes on the wealthy benefited the poor, and he unabashedly claimed that massive rearming was the way to disarm. A few years later, George Bush said "the last best chance for peace" was to declare war against Iraq, and then said "the goal of the war is peace." All these statements qualify as advanced "doublespeak."

Reagan and Bush also understood the important Orwellian lesson in focusing public hatred on the repeated images of the enemy. Orwell had used the loathsome TV visage of Goldstein in "Two Minutes Hate" periods throughout the day. Reagan used Khomeni, then Khadafy, then Ortega. Bush continued the tendency, focusing American hatred on images of Willie Horton, then Manuel Noriega, then Saddam Hussein.

The degree to which the public has accepted such presidential behavior without rebellion, and has enthusiastically supported both Reagan and Bush, is the degree to which George Orwell's predictions have proven accurate, and that television's political importance has been realized.

LATE NEWS: VIDEO WAR

February 4, 1991. As I write these words we are three weeks into the Iraq-U.S. war. My friends tell me they are "glued" to their TV screens, and ask if I am too.

In fact, I have watched some TV, more in amazement and disgust than

torical, wide-ranging, multifaceted, and faster in covering important events.

As with other news in the past, television's ability to deliver has been highly overrated. From the first day of the war, when CNN's Baghdad correspondents reported bombing in the city, TV delivered very little in